Governing the Environmental Commons
POLI 441
Fall 2018

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Common Property Resources (CPR's) are a persistent social dilemma. Texas Gulf Coast shrimpers experience the problem of overfishing, Nepalese farmers face the problem of water use for dry farming, students face the problem of congested internet usage and people fleeing a hurricane face traffic jams. CPR's are simple to characterize: they involve public goods that can be privately consumed and once consumed, they disappear. While it is in everyone's interest to ensure that the public good is preserved, everyone has an incentive to overuse that good. The converse is true for standard public goods. Here it is in everyone's interest that the public good be provided, but everyone has an incentive to free ride on the efforts of others.

Why is this a political science class? The usual solution for handling CPR's involves simply imposing a governmental mechanism. Typically this means a top-down solution for the problem, regardless of the fit to the specific problem. In recent years many political scientists have argued that this is an ill-conceived public policy solution. Local institutional arrangements often craft much better mechanisms to resolve local CPR's. This class teaches some of the tools available for understanding and analyzing a host of local social and political problems.

During the course you will be touching on a number of different readings. You will learn something about Institutional Analysis and Design; you will learn a little game theory; you will learn about laboratory experimental methods. Please approach the material with an open, but skeptical mind.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes.

At the end of the course you will be expected to:
1. Understand the central dilemma of a commons.
2. Apply social science methods to a CPR/Public Good
3. Carry out original research on a CPR/Public Good
4. Provide a detailed policy recommendation for your CPR/Public Good

Textbooks.

The following should be purchased (order them on line – they are not in the bookstore). In addition, you will read several articles that are available in the journals and posted on CANVAS. These are noted in the syllabus.

- Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the Commons : The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* Cambridge: Cambridge Univesity Press.
- Diamond, Jared. 2005. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. Cambridge: New York: Viking Press.

Research Project.

The primary focus of the seminar will be your research project. The research project will be less of an academic exercise and more of a "hands-on" exercise. CPRs and Public Good problems are everywhere and the project will analyze such a problem in the Houston area. You will work as a "team" with the other class members. The team will conduct research on the "problem," the team will make periodic reports in class, the team will present its findings to the afflicted parties, and the team will write a formal paper detailing its recommendations.

You will have a number of deadlines to meet. However, each deadline will help you keep your research project on target.

Overview of deadlines:

Sept. 19	Brief overview of the project. (One page memo.)
Oct. 10	Research design. (Multi-page memo.)
Nov. 14	Initial findings. (Multi-page memo.)
Nov. 28	Presentation of findings and recommendations to class/organization. (Oral and visual presentation.)
Dec. 12	Final paper. (Multi-page paper.)

Grading:

This is a seminar. There will be no exams. Grades will be based on the following: class participation 25%; written assignments (prior to final paper) 30%; presentation 15%; final paper 30%. You are expected to keep up-to-date with *all* reading assignments and to be prepared to discuss the readings during class. Expect to be called on in class to discuss the readings. The Honor Code is in effect for all class assignments. This applies to the "team" work. The entire team is responsible for its work. This may not seem fair, but it happens to be the way the world beyond the hedges works.

Course Outline.

Note: Readings are subject to change. Keep current with the syllabus.

Date	Topic	Readings
Aug. 22	Introduction – Brainstorming topics	
Aug. 29	Logic of the Commons	**Garrett Hardin**. 1968. "Tragedy of the Commons" *Science*, 162:1243-1248. **Ostrom, V. and E. Ostrom**. 1977. "Public Goods and Public Choices," Pp. 7-49 in *Alternatives for Delivering Public Services: Toward Improved Performance.* (E. S. Savas, ed.) Westview Press. **Ostrom, Elinor**. 1999. "Coping With Tragedies of the Commons." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 2: 493-535.
Sept. 5	Examples of CPRs	Ostrom, Chapter 1 Diamond, Chapters 1-5
Sept. 12	Are bad outcomes inevitable?	Diamond, Chapters 6-13
Sept. 19	Systematic Study of CPRs	Ostrom, Chapters 2-5.
Sept. 26	CPR Framework	Ostrom, Chapter 6 **Ratner, Blake D, Ruth Meinzen-Dick, Jon Hellin, Everisto Mapedza, E Unruh, Wouter Veening, Eric Haglund, Candace May, and Carl Bruch.** "Addressing Conflict through Collective Action in Natural Resource Management." *International Journal of the Commons* 11, no. 2 (2017). **Faysse, Nicolas, and Azza Ben Mustapha.** "Finding Common Ground between Theories of Collective Action: The Potential of Analyses at a Meso-Scale." *International Journal of the Commons* 11, no. 2 (2017): 928-49.

Oct. 3	Case Studies 1	**McKinney, Laura, and Yuki Kato.** "Community Context of Food Justice: Reflections on a Free Local Produce Program in a New Orleans Food Desert." *J AIMS Agriculture Food Policy* 2, no. 2 (2017): 183-200. **Norbutas, Lukas, and Rense Corten.** "Sustainability of Generalized Exchange in the Sharing Economy: The Case of the "Freecycling" Facebook Groups." *International Journal of the Commons* 12, no. 1 (2018).
Oct. 10	Case Studies 2	**Joubert, Brian, and Robert Summers**. "The Evolution and Importance Of rules-in-Use'and Low-Level Penalties in Village-Level Collective Action." *J Water Alternatives* 11, no. 2 (2018): 297-313. **Lammers, Pina Lena, Torsten Richter, Maren Lux, Jonah Ratsimbazafy, and Jasmin Mantilla-Contreras.** "The Challenges of Community-Based Conservation in Developing Countries—a Case Study from Lake Alaotra, Madagascar." *Journal for Nature Conservation* 40 (2017): 100-12.
Oct. 17	Institutions	**Rahman, HM, Arlette Saint Ville, Andrew Song, June Po, Elsa Berthet, Jeremy Brammer, Nicolas Brunet, Lingaraj Jayaprakash, Kristen Lowitt, and Archi Rastogi.** "A Framework for Analyzing Institutional Gaps in Natural Resource Governance." *International Journal of the Commons* 11, no. 2 (2017). **Ntuli, Herbert, and Edwin Muchapondwa.** "The Role of Institutions in Community Wildlife Conservation in Zimbabwe." *International Journal of the Commons* 12, no. 1 (2018): 134-69.

Oct. 24	Isolating CPRs	**Ostrom, Elinor.** 2000. "Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 14(3), 137-58. **Wilson, Rick K.** 2014. "Elinor Ostrom's Challenge for Laboratory Experiments." *Journal of Natural Resources Policy Research*, 6(4), 279-83. **Ostrom, Elinor; James Walker and Roy Gar** 1992. "Covenants with and without a Sword: Governance Is Possible." *American Political Sc Review*, 86(2), 404-17.
Oct. 31	Applied CPRs	**Ostrom, Elinor, Roy Gardner and James Walker**. 1994. *Rules, Games and Common-Pool Resources*. Chapter 10-14 (pp. 221-318).
Nov. 7	Other Perspectives	Diamond, Chapters 14-16. **Ostrom, Elinor.** 2007. "A Diagnostic Approach for Going Beyond Panaceas." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 104(39), 15181-87.
Nov. 14	Work Week	
Nov. 21	Work Week	
Nov. 28	Presentations	
Dec. 12	Final Writeup Due	